
Scope

This policy applies to Council officials. This policy applies in situations where Council officials:

- Communicate with the media about Council affairs;
- Attend public speaking engagements; or
- Make public comment on Council affairs.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Clearly indicate Council's authorised spokespersons and define roles and responsibilities within Council for working with the media;
- Ensure appropriate authorisation and responsibility for information provided;
- Assist the media by clarifying the level of service they can expect regarding access to Council officials, provision of information and responses to enquiries;
- To limit the reputation risk and communication of inaccurate information; and
- Provide effective communication of Council affairs to the public through the media.

Definitions

Council means Edward River Council.

Council affairs means matters before the Council or other Council business, Council policy, interpretation of policy, management of Council business, management of Council staff or actions or matters that may commit the Council's resources to any purpose.

Councillor means a person elected to the governing body of Edward River Council as per section 222 of the Local Government Act 1993.

Council officer means staff of Edward River Council.

Council officials means Council officials as defined in Council's Code of Conduct, including Councillors, Council officers, and delegates of Council, including contractors, consultants, volunteers and external persons appointed to committees of Council.

Media includes all print, broadcast and online media mediums used for communicating information to the public domain, including, but not limited to, newspapers, magazines, internet publishers, radio and television broadcasters.

Public comment includes any information, opinion or view communicated to a public audience via a public medium or medium where it is reasonably foreseeable that the publication or circulation will enter the public domain, including, but not limited to, media releases, press statements, interviews with the media, public speaking engagements, opinion pieces and letters to the editor.

Publication is the distribution of information via print or electronic media including, but not limited to, newspapers, magazines, internet publishers, radio and television broadcasters.

Legislative Requirements

- Freedom of Information Act 1989
- Local Government Act 1993
- Privacy Act 1988

Policy Statement

1. General Principles

- 1.1 Edward River Council is committed to keeping its local community well informed about its decisions, services, programmes, events and activities. To achieve this outcome, Council recognises the value of establishing and maintaining a strong working relationship with the media and facilitating an open exchange of information between Council and the media.
- 1.2 The aim of public engagement through the media is to communicate and build the Edward River region's reputation and to maximise positive news and editorial coverage of Council decisions, services, programmes, events and activities, with an emphasis on promoting a positive, progressive and professional image of Council and its staff.
- 1.3 Council officers must support Council decisions and all Council officials must refrain from using the media to make negative personal reflections on each other or comments that could be interpreted as such and which are reasonably likely to undermine public confidence in the Council or local government generally.

2. Public Comment

- 2.1 Council will openly discuss matters of interest with the media and provide public comment to the media unless disclosure of certain information contravenes Council's obligations of confidentiality or privacy, duty of care, or could infringe on laws or regulations that govern its operations.
- 2.2 When making public comment, Councillors must uphold and represent accurately the policies and decisions of Council.
- 2.3 When making public comment, Councillors must make clear to the media that comments:
 - a. Are being made as an individual;
 - b. Are not necessarily the view of the Council; and
 - c. May relate to matters that have not yet been determined by Council.

3. Authorised Spokespersons

- 3.1 The Mayor is the authorised spokesperson to the media on decisions made by Council and committees of Council.
- 3.2 In the absence of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor is the authorised spokesperson to the media on decisions made by Council and committees of Council.

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- 3.3 The General Manager is the authorised spokesperson to the media on all administrative and operational matters.
- 3.4 The General Manager may delegate to other Council officers authority to speak to the media on administrative and operational matter where comment of a technical nature is required. Council officers will generally be used as authorised spokespeople when public comment specific decisions, services, programmes, events and activities relevant to the spokesperson's area of expertise or responsibility is required.
- 3.5 The Communications Advisor is an authorised spokesperson on matters of fact or clarification. When responding to media enquiries, the Communications Advisor will request that media credit their responses to 'a Council spokesperson', unless expressly credited to the Mayor, General Manager or other authorised spokesperson.

4. Media Liaison

- 4.1 The Communications Advisor is the principal liaison between Council and the media and is responsible for managing media enquiries and requests for interviews. This assists in ensuring accurate, responsible and relevant information is provided to the media and ensure the most positive and appropriate coverage of Council affairs is achieved.
- 4.2 All media requests should be directed to the Communications Advisor in the first instance; the request for comment will then be directed to the Mayor or the General Manager.
- 4.3 All media statements should be given in writing where possible to ensure accurate reporting.
- 4.4 Media organisations and their representatives will be treated equally and without bias.
- 4.5 Media enquiries and requests for interviews will be actioned promptly and efficiently and with a view to meeting the media's deadlines.
- 4.6 Council spokespersons will not knowingly provide information to the media which is misleading, untruthful or inaccurate. The Communications Advisor will ensure all information provided to the media is checked for accuracy and relevance prior to being distributed.
- 4.7 The Communications Advisor will be informed of any requests for comment from media received directly by Council.

5. Breaches

- 5.1 Council officials will not provide public comment unless express authorised to do so under this policy. Breaches of this policy will be dealt with in accordance with Council's Code of Conduct.

Associated Policies and Procedures

- Edward River Council Code of Conduct

POLICY VERSION CONTROL

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ECM Doc Set ID	143276			
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Responsible Officer	General Manager			
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